

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 03790 031606Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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O R 031528Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8622
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3790

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN PROTEST AGAINST DEPARTMENT'S JULY 2 STATEMENT ON
LEBANON

1. DEPFONMIN KADDUR SUMMONED CHARGE AT 2:00 P.M. JULY 3
AND READ THE FOLLOWING: "WE DEEPLY REGRET STATEMENT
DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ISSUED ON SITUATION IN LEBANON.
DECLARATION WAS MADE AS IF FIGHTING WERE BETWEEN TWO PARTIES
AS WAS THE SITUATION IN THE PAST WHEN LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN
GROUPS CLASHED AND THIS DESPITE FACT THAT USG KNOWS VERY WELL
FIGHTING STARTED AS A RESULT OF SATTACKS FROM GROUPS OF
SABOTEURS WHO WANTED TO DISRUPT SECURITY AND PEACE IN LEBANON
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BY ATTACKING AND COMMITTING AGGRESSION AGAINST
THE FORCES OF LEGITIMACY WHICH REPRESENT THE LEBANESE
STATE. USG ISSUED STATEMENT WITH KNOWLEDTE THAT PRESIDENT
SARKIS HAD INFORMED THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT
THAT ARMED SABOTEURS INITIATED ATTACK AGAINST ADF FORCES.
SYRIAN GOVERNMENT REGRETS THIS STATEMENT AND SEES IN IT
A DANGEROUS TREND WHICH DOES NOT SERVE EITHER THE PROSPECTS

OF PEACE IN LEBANON OR BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THIS STATEMENT CAN ONLY BE CONSIDERED AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE SABOTEURS AND OUTLAWS TO CONTINUE THEIR ACTIONS AGAINST LAW AND ORDER."

2. CHARGE TOLD DEPFONMIN HE WOULD TRANSMIT THIS SYRIAN REACTION IMMEDIATELY TO USG. HE WISHED TO NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT STATEMENT IN QUESTION COULD WELL HAVE BEEN ISSUED PRIOR TO DEPARTMENT'S RECEIPT OF FONMIN KHADDAM'S COMMENTS TO US LAST EVENING (DAMASCUS 3769). CHARGE ALSO NOTED THAT WHILE PRESIDENT SARKIS HAD CLEARLY LABELLED NLP AS INITIATOR OF JULY 1 FIGHTING, OUR READING HOW FIGHTING BROKE OUT JULY 2 WAS LESS CLEAR. OUR EMBASSY IN BEIRUT HAD NOTED TWO INCIDENTS WHICH MIGHT HAVE SPARKED RENEWED FIGHTING: KIDNAPPING OF FOUR SYRIAN SOLDIERS BY PHALANGE ELEMENT AND INCIDENT BETWEEN PHALANGE AND SYRIANS AT A ROADBLOCK. FONMIN KHADDAM HAD ATTRIBUTED OUTBREAK TO ARTILLERY AND MACHINE GUN FIRE ON ADF FROM PHALANGE AND CHAMOUNIST GROUPS. CHARGE THEN READ US STATEMENT TO KADDUR IN ORDER TO VERIFY THAT SYRIANS HAD CORRECT TEXT (THEY DID), AND TO EMPHASIZE THAT ITS INTENT AND THRUST WAS TO HELP STOP LATEST FIGHTING. CHARGE NOTED THAT USG HAD FREQUENTLY REAFFIRMED ITS APPRECIATION OF CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE SYRIA IS PLAYING IN LEBANON.

3. KADDUR REPLIED THAT BOTH THE TEXT OF THE STATEMENT
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AND THE WAY CHARGE HAD DESCRIBED FIGHTING IN BEIRUT (DRAWN FROM BEIRUT 3672) MADE IT SEEM AS THOUGH FIGHTING WAS TAKING PLACE BETWEEN TWO EQUAL PARTIES. THE DECLARATION CONTAINED NO SIGN OF APPRECIATION OF THE ROLE OF THE ADF WHICH WAS THE ARMY OF THE LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY IN LEBANON. A PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY OF ANY LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY WHEN PROVOKED AND ATTACKED WAS TO STOP VIOLENCE AND RESTORE PEACE.

4. CHARGE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE POINT BUT WANTED TO MAKE PERSONAL OBSERVATION WHICH MIGHT BE HAVING SOME EFFECT ON USG. IT WAS THAT ADF RESPONSE COULD BE SEEN AS MASSIVELY OUT OF PROPORTION TO THE PROVOCATION. OUR EMBASSY IN BEIRUT HAD REPORTED MASSIVE ARTILLERY BARRAGE IN EAST BEIRUT LAST EVENING AND SUCH MEASURES COULD NOT HELP BU INJURE INNOCENT PEOPLE. KADDUR REPLIED HE DID NOT KNOW THE EXACT STRENGTH OF THE ADF RETALIATION BUT HE ASSUMED ADF HAD TO REPLY FORCEFULLY OR ELSE FIGHTING WOULD CONTINUE. ADF'S ROLE WAS TO RESTORE A STATE OF SECURITY. IT NEEDED TO INPOSE ITSELF AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY AND GAIN RESPECT, OTHERWISE ITS TASK WOULD BECOME IMPOSSIBLE. FROM STRICTLY MILITARY POINT OF VIEW, KADDUR CONTINUED, IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR REGULAR ARMY

FORCES WHO WERE STATIONED IN KNOWN POSITIONS AND WERE EASY TARGETS TO STRIKE AGAINST ARMED INDIVIDUALS OR GANGS WHO MELTED BACK INTO THE POPULATION. ADF HAD TO DEFEND ITS AUTHORITY AGAINST ALL PARTIES WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE WHAT WAS THE PROPER STRENGTH FOR RESPONSE.

5. COMMENT: AS I REREAD OUR STATEMENT LAST EVENING AND EMBASSY BEIRUT'S REPORTING, BELIEVE SYRIANS DO HAVE A POINT. PREPONDERANCE OF EVIDENCE SUGGEST THAT FIGHTING ON JULY 2 AS WELL AS JULY 1 WAS PROVOKED BY CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN ORDER TO DRAW SYRIAN ADF FORCES INTO FIGHTING AND TO WEAKEN THEREBY THE POWER OF PRESIDENT SARKIS' LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT. WHILE ADF RESPONSE WAS CLEARLY EXCESSIVE, CONFIDENTIAL

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CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND THEIR LEADERS HAD AND STILL HAVE IT WITHIN THEIR POWER TO BRING FIGHTING TO A HALT AND TO CLAMP DOWN ON FURTHER PROVOCATIONS.
PELLETREAU

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